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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	11
1. A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CREATING ENGLISH NEWS VIDEOS TO ENHANCE SPEAKING SKILLS FOR ENGLISH CLUB MEMBERS AT HUNG YEN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION <b>Tuan Minh Dinh, Huong Thao Le, Thi Huyen Trang Nguyen</b> .....	17
2. APPLYING BLENDED LEARNING IN ENGLISH LESSONS TO DEVELOP HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH AND GENERAL COMPETENCE IN VIETNAM <b>Nguyen Thi Phuong</b> .....	28
3. APPLYING SUGGESTOPEDIA TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT SWINBURNE VIETNAM <b>Nguyen Mai Linh , Nguyen Thi Thuy Nga</b> .....	45
4. APPLYING CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN TRANSLATION OF POLITICAL SPEECHES: A FOCUS ON NON-DEFINING MODIFIERS <b>Nguyen Viet Thien Tu</b> .....	55
5. APPROACHES TO EMBEDDING SPEECH ACT THEORY IN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS <b>Dang Nghiem Thu Nga</b> .....	69
6. CAMBODIAN STUDENTS' CHALLENGES WITH ENGLISH WORD STRESS AND STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH PRONOUNCING WORD STRESS <b>Sekkhapirath Set</b> .....	82
7. DIFFICULTIES AND STRATEGIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AND FRENCH MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY: A SURVEY STUDY OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AT A MEDICAL UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM <b>Bui Thi Anh Tuyet, Dong Quynh Trang, Trinh Thi Thu Trang, Nguyen Thu Hien, Tran Thi Ha Giang</b> .....	102
8. ENHANCING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH FOR TOURISM STUDENTS THROUGH PROJECT - BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES <b>Hoang Thi Thanh, Nguyen Thi Thao, Pham Dieu Ly, Dinh Thi Bich Nguyet, Tran Minh Duc</b> .....	114
9. ENHANCING STUDENTS' PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES <b>Dao Thi Van Hong, Nguyen Thi Huyen Trang</b> .....	135
10. EMBEDDING DRAMAS IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR LESSONS FOR ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS: PRACTICE AND SUGGESTIONS <b>Tran Thi Dung, Nguyen Minh Ha, Nguyen Thi Huong</b> .....	145
11. EXPLORING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS MINDMEISTER TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS: THE CASE OF SAIGON UNIVERSITY <b>Dang Vu Minh Thu, Do Ngoc Nhu Thuyen</b> .....	166

12.	EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTENSIVE READING THE INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY ACQUISITION OF EFL LEARNERS <b>Nguyen Thi Huyen Trang</b> .....	184
13.	FACTORS THAT CAUSE EFL LEARNERS' ENGLISH-SPEAKING ANXIETY: A CASE STUDY OF CAMBODIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS <b>Rany Sam, Hak Yoeng, Morin Tieng, Sarith Chiv</b> .....	197
14.	INVESTIGATING TEACHING MANAGEMENT FOR ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AT A HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT <b>Quach Thi To Nu</b> .....	213
15.	INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' GRAMMARLY INDEPENDENT APPROPRIATION: MOTIVATION AND PERCEPTION <b>Praditya Putri Utami, Evi Karlina Ambarwati, Indah Purnama Dewi</b> .....	227
16.	MARKERS OF IMPORTANCE USED IN LECTURES FROM TOEFL IBT <b>Nguyen Thi My Lien, Dao Thi Linh Tam, Tran Le Thanh Tu, Nguyen Thi Kim Phuong</b> .....	238
17.	MOODLE-BASED ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES TEACHING AT HO CHI MINH CITY UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION <b>Su Thi Ai My, Hua Tran Phuong Thao</b> .....	257
18.	NON-VERBAL INTERACTION IN ELT CLASS SETTING: TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION AND ADVANCEMENT <b>Nguyen Thi Hong Van</b> .....	268
19.	PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED PROJECT BASED LEARNING <b>Evi Karlina Ambarwati</b> .....	284
20.	STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF YOUTUBE FOR PRACTICING LISTENING OUTSIDE CLASSROOMS <b>Le Thi Thuy Nhung</b> .....	298
21.	STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SELF-RECORDING VIDEOS IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS <b>Lam Thuy Trang, Vo Thi Bich Phuong</b> .....	313
22.	TEACHING REFLECTION TO FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS OF ESL: A THREE-YEAR COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY IN RURAL VIETNAM <b>Hien Minh Thi Tran, Farshid Anvari, Hien Dieu Thi Phan</b> .....	326
23.	TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION, PEER OBSERVATION AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOL <b>Hoang Thi Man</b> .....	344
24.	THE REALIZATION OF THEMATIC PROGRESSION IN ACADEMIC WRITING IN GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY <b>Nguyen Mai Linh, Nguyen Thi Thuy Nga</b> .....	360
25.	THE ATTITUDES OF PRE-INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS IN USING GOOGLE TRANSLATE AS A LEARNING TOOL DURING IN-CLASS WRITING LESSONS <b>Dang Vu Minh Thu, Nguyen Lam Anh Duong, Nguyen Hoang Thanh Tam</b> .....	375
26.	TEACHER IDEOLOGIES OF ENGLISH IN 21 <sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: THE PEOPLE'S POLICE ACADEMY AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING <b>Dinh Thi Van Anh</b> .....	387

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27.	USE OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING TO DEVELOP SPEAKING SKILLS FOR FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS	
	<b>Do Tien Duc</b> .....	401
28.	UNCLOAKING IELTS INTERNATIONAL TEST OR EXCLUSION THREAT?	
	<b>Huong Ngo</b> .....	416
29.	USING GLOBAL CLASSROOM TO ENHANCE SPEAKING SKILL FOR EFL STUDENTS	
	<b>Duong Thi Van Anh, Nguyen Thi Huyen Trang</b> .....	429
30.	VIETNAMESE NOVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION PROCESS: MULTIPLE CASE STUDIES IN HANOI	
	<b>Hoang Anh Phong, Nguyen La Yen Nhi</b> .....	443
31.	YOUGLISH AS A TOOL OF IMPROVING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION	
	<b>Ly Hoang Thi Minh</b> .....	454

# FACTORS THAT CAUSE EFL LEARNERS' ENGLISH-SPEAKING ANXIETY: A CASE STUDY OF CAMBODIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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**Abstract:** *It is undeniable that most EFL learners have experienced academic difficulty in learning English; most of them live in non-English-speaking countries that use English as a foreign language, for example, Cambodia. This study has two main purposes, including: (1) to investigate the factors that cause EFL learners' speaking anxiety in their higher education institutions; and (2) to examine the influences of anxiety factors on EFL learners' speaking anxiety. The research employed a quantitative research method by using purposive sampling; a self-reported questionnaire was administered to 381 English students among senior students who currently study at three universities. Based on the findings of this research, there are six factors that make them feel anxious in the English foreign language classroom: lack of knowledge, lack of self-confidence, lack of self-esteem, lack of class interaction, lack of practice, and poor listening comprehension. Based on the findings, the researcher provides some recommendations to solve students' English-speaking anxiety as well as improve students' learning strategies.*

**Keywords:** *Case Study, Cambodian Higher Education Institutions, EFL Learners, English-Speaking Anxiety*

## INTRODUCTION

Cambodia has 189 higher education institutions, including 79 public and 110 private universities spread across 20 provinces and Phnom Penh, managed by 17 ministries and one secretariat (MoEYS, 2023). It is worth noting that the annual registration rate in Cambodian higher education increased by more than two times between 2003 and 2023, from 14,778 to 28,4599 (MoEYS, 2023). A bilingual model of instruction that includes both Khmer and English may be more beneficial for academic programs in Cambodia (Lin *et al.*, 2023; Chen *et al.*, 2020; Lan *et al.*, 2024; Long *et al.*, 2024; Williams *et al.*, 2014). Several studies have highlighted Cambodian students' English-speaking anxiety, which can negatively affect their proficiency in English (Igawa, 2008; Moore & Bounchan, 2010; Hashim, 2014; Heng, 2017; Moore & Bounchan, 2020; Chork *et al.*, 2024; Em *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, it is crucial to explore the impact of English-speaking anxiety on students in EFL classrooms at three universities in Cambodia.

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Over the last decade, foreign language teachers have proposed that anxiety has a significant impact on whether or not foreign language learners succeed (Ganschow, 1994). There have been numerous studies conducted to investigate the effects of foreign language anxiety on foreign language learners. Anxiety has a negative impact on foreign language learning and is one of the factors contributing to learners' low or high achievement. For instance, Young (1990) looked at students' thoughts on speaking and anxiety and discovered that the type of activities in the classroom had an impact on the students' comfort or amount of fear. According to Phillips (1992), there is a link between language anxiety and poor oral performance. According to Aida, (1994), there is a link between anxiety and oral abilities as well as final grade outcomes in second semester Japanese. According to (Cheng, 1999), speaking and writing anxiety may be significantly influenced by low self-confidence. According to (Matsuda & Gobel 2003) first-year students' classroom performance was significantly influenced by their English ability, gender, and self-confidence. Language learning challenges, differences, and learners' own sense of self can all contribute to language anxiety.

### **Research problems**

This study focuses on the significant levels of anxiety related to English-speaking experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at rural universities in Cambodia. Despite the increasing enrollment in higher education, many students face persistent language barriers and anxiety, which are deeply rooted in their high school education. With the national examination serving as the gateway to higher education, many high school students do not prioritize English due to constraints related to their schedules, personal lifestyles, and school environments. This often results in inadequate English proficiency when they enter college (Neau, 2003; Nget, 2020; Ngel, 2022; Meng, 2023). Notably, Cambodia is ranked 98<sup>th</sup> out of 113 countries in terms of English proficiency, which is considered low (EFEPI, 2023). This study aims to identify the primary factors contributing to this anxiety and to explore how it affects the academic performance of students in a predominantly non-English-speaking context.

### **Research Objectives**

1) To investigate the factors that cause EFL learners' speaking anxiety in their higher education institutions; and

2) To examine the influences of factors on EFL learners' speaking anxiety

#### *Research question*

This research aims to investigate Factors that Cause EFL Learners' English-Speaking Anxiety. To achieve this aim, the following research questions are put forward:

(1) *What factors contribute to speaking anxiety among EFL learners in higher education institutions?*

(2) *How do these factors of anxiety influence students' academic performance in speaking English?*

### **Research hypothesis**

**H1:** Lack of knowledge significantly contributes to higher levels of speaking anxiety among EFL learners.

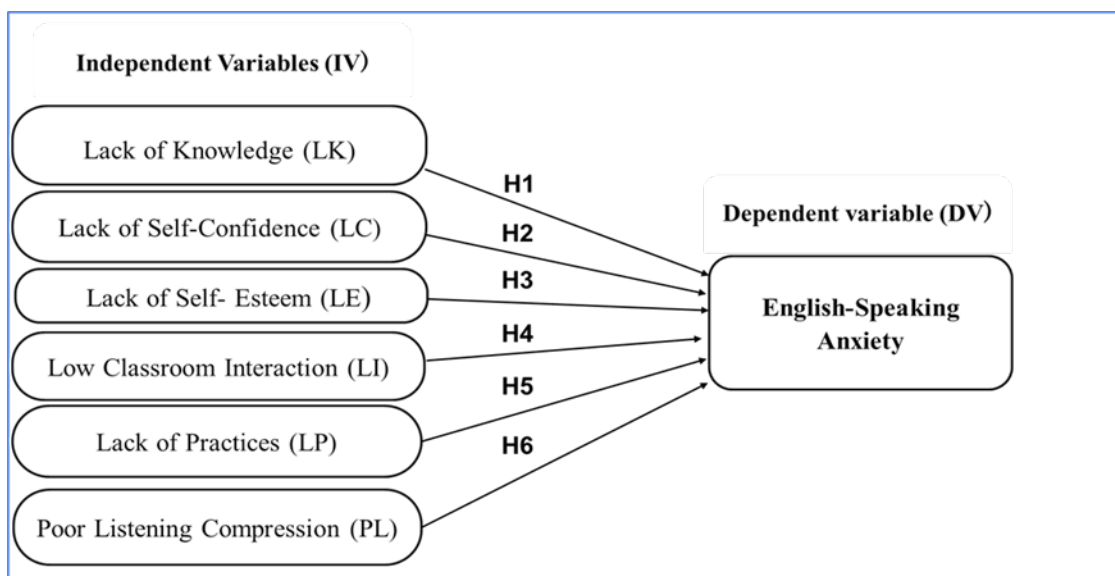
**H2:** Low self-confidence in EFL learners significantly contributes to their speaking anxiety.

**H3:** Lack of self-esteem is significantly associated with increased speaking anxiety in EFL learners.

**H4:** Limited classroom interaction significantly increases speaking anxiety among EFL learners.

**H5:** Lack of practice significantly impacts the levels of speaking anxiety in EFL learners.

**H6:** Poor listening comprehension is a significant predictor of speaking anxiety in EFL learners.



**Figure 1. Hypotheses**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Learning English in Cambodian Higher Education**

During the French colonial era, higher education was generally neglected, with children from elite and middle-class families traveling to France for university education, as was the case with Pol Pot and the other leaders of the Democratic Kampuchea revolutionary party. Nonetheless, higher education has a history that dates back to late French colonialism, when the National Institute of Law, National Institute of Politics, and National Institute of Economic Sciences were established in 1947. The Khmer Royal University (now the Royal University of Phnom Penh) was Cambodia’s first full-fledged university, established in 1960 (Sam *et al.* 2012a, 2012b; Sam *et al.* 2013a, 2013b). In 1965, six new tertiary institutions were established: the People’s University, the Royal Technical University, the Royal University of Agricultural Science, the Royal University of Fine Arts, the Royal University of Kompong Cham, and the Royal University of Takeo-Kampot (Williams & Keng, 2016; Tieng *et al.*, 2023). During the Khmer Rouge era, such institutions were completely closed, but since the late 1990s, both public and private higher education have expanded significantly across the country.

Anxiety is an innate response that affects every individual from birth. It often manifests spontaneously in stressful situations or when a person feels threatened. This emotion is characterized by feelings of nervousness, confusion, and apprehension, potentially impacting one's ability to function in various situations. Anxiety involves a subjective feeling of nervousness, stress, and worry, accompanied by arousal of the autonomic nervous system. General anxiety refers to an excessive and unnecessary worry about daily matters, which can seem unrealistic or disproportionate (Oflaz, 2019; Horwitz, 1986). This type of anxiety can dominate a person's life, affecting work, school, relationships, and social activities, as noted by Suleimenova (2013). Anxiety is a well-documented psychological phenomenon that typically arises as a natural bodily response to perceived threats. It is commonly identified by feelings of being threatened, apprehension, tension, or worry. Passer (2009) describes anxiety as a state of tension and apprehension triggered by perceived threats, suggesting that feelings of anxiety are a natural human reaction. Similarly, Ormrod (2011) defines anxiety as unease and apprehension about situations with uncertain outcomes. From these definitions, we can conclude that anxiety is fundamentally a response to perceived threats, characterized by feelings of apprehension, tension, and worry, particularly relevant in scenarios that impact learners.

### **Types of anxiety**

Anxiety can be categorized into several types, among which state anxiety and trait anxiety are the most well-known. State anxiety occurs in specific situations and is a temporary experience of anxiousness when faced with a perceived threat. As Ormrod (2011) notes, it is a fleeting feeling of anxiety elicited by a threatening situation, manifesting as nervousness or pressure in response to an external event. This type of anxiety is not permanent; it arises in particular stressful situations and dissipates when the threat subsides.

On the other hand, trait anxiety is a more persistent pattern of anxiety that can occur even in the absence of immediate external threats; trait anxiety involves a habitual response of anxiety to both threatening and non-threatening situations (Passer, 2009). Individuals with trait anxiety tend to worry excessively and feel disproportionately threatened by various elements in their environment. To summarize, anxiety can be divided based on its intensity, duration, and the situations in which it occurs: state anxiety, which is a temporary reaction to a specific situation, and trait anxiety, a more intense and enduring form of anxiety that persists regardless of circumstances.

### **Sources of language anxiety**

Horwitz (1986) identified three key factors that influence the performance anxieties of students: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension, the first factor, is a type of shyness marked by a fear of communicating with others. This anxiety is common among EFL students, who often feel embarrassed to speak English with their teachers and peers. Such students may feel scrutinized, worrying about making grammatical mistakes, which heightens their anxiety during English interactions. They may also believe their English proficiency is inferior compared to that of their peers.



Test anxiety, as described by Gordon (1955), is a form of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure. This anxiety typically arises during English language assessments, particularly oral exams. Even well-prepared students can experience discomfort and make atypical errors under pressure, losing their ability to perform as expected. Sari (2017) suggests that test anxiety can motivate students to study harder and improve performance; however, anxiety often leads students to forget answers they previously knew, resulting in incorrect responses during the test due to nervousness (Horwitz, 1986; Si, 2019). Fear of negative evaluation involves apprehension about how others will judge one's abilities, as defined by Watson & Friend (1969). Therefore, this fear can lead students to avoid situations where their skills are evaluated and to expect negative feedback. Such anxiety makes students hesitant to demonstrate their English abilities openly, fearful of negative critiques from classmates and potentially damaging corrections from teachers, which could undermine their self-esteem in front of their peers.

### **Foreign language anxiety**

Students often experience significant anxiety when dealing with English as a foreign language in the classroom. This overwhelming fear can leave them feeling incapable of learning English, particularly the speaking skills. According to Sari (2017), one reason for this heightened anxiety during oral exercises is the unsystematic teaching methods that do not allocate sufficient time for direct conversation. Students might feel that their role is merely to listen to explanations from their English teacher and then write down their responses, without actively using English to discuss their understanding or confusion.

Furthermore, the lack of opportunities provided by teachers for students to practice speaking English contributes to this anxiety; students' speaking skills would naturally improve with intensive practice in their environments (Horwitz, 1986; Thornbury, 2005; Si, 2019). Rivers (1986) has pointed out that many language teaching classes are hindered by an authoritarian teaching system. This occurs because teachers, being well-versed in the language, often position themselves as always correct, frequently criticizing students' mistakes. As a result, students may see their teachers as infallible role models and the ultimate source of knowledge. In various scenarios, such as giving public speeches, taking exams, or participating in class discussions, students studying English may feel anxious. Students who are not fluent in English can experience stress and embarrassment. Undoubtedly, students with limited fluency in English might lack self-confidence when asked to speak, exacerbating their anxiety (Rivers, 1986; Phillips, 1992; Thornbury, 2005).

### **Speaking anxiety and students' performance**

Speaking is a critical component of language learning. It significantly influences the process of language acquisition, with speaking anxiety playing a crucial role. Tercan (2015) notes that speaking is the primary source of anxiety among learners. This form of anxiety is a significant affective variable that adversely affects students' oral performance in English, as discussed by Melouah (2013). It hampers students' adaptation to the learning environment and their overall achievement, making it evident that many learners fear using a foreign language orally. Tercan (2015) identifies four main causes of speaking anxiety: personal reasons, the teacher's demeanor

in the classroom, learners' beliefs, and testing and teaching procedures. To succeed in language learning, it is essential to overcome speaking anxiety. Woodrow (2004) explored the relationship between second language anxiety and speaking performance in a study involving 275 advanced English for Academic Purposes students, using a specially designed questionnaire. The study revealed a significant negative correlation between second language speaking anxiety and oral performance, with interactions with native speakers identified as the major anxiety trigger. It concluded that speaking anxiety has a debilitating effect on some students' ability to speak English. In a similar vein, Tercan (2015) conducted research with 234 students to investigate the sources of foreign language speaking anxiety and its correlation with proficiency levels. The study utilized an adapted version of the Foreign Language Speaking Scale and found a moderate level of speaking anxiety among participants. Female participants were slightly more anxious than males. Interestingly, no significant correlation was found between the learners' language proficiency and their level of speaking anxiety. However, the study highlighted testing procedures, personal reasons, and fear of negative evaluation as the principal anxiety-provoking factors.

### **Possible factors contributing to speaking anxiety**

Anxiety can stem from various sources, often linked to educational practices and the approaches taken by teachers. For example, speaking activities are frequently identified as anxiety triggers. speaking a foreign language caused the most anxiety among students (Horwitz, 1986). Moreover, inappropriate teaching methods, such as speaking too rapidly, can exacerbate this nervousness. Worde (2003) suggests that communication anxiety often arises from students' inability to comprehend what is being taught in class. Additionally, using a threatening teaching method, such as calling on students in sequential seating order, can also induce anxiety. Anxiety may also be due to the overwhelming volume of material. Students might find speaking classes stressful when they lack sufficient time to absorb the lessons due to an excessive amount of material. Furthermore, the difficulty level of speaking classes and students' performance compared to other classes can contribute to their anxiety, making these classes appear more daunting and challenging.

Aside from these external factors, anxiety can also originate from the students themselves, particularly their beliefs about speaking. Some students may find language learning daunting because they have conditioned themselves to believe it is inherently difficult. For instance, some believe they should speak perfectly, while others view English as a challenging subject. These beliefs can heighten speaking anxiety. Horwitz (1986) also noted that specific beliefs about language learning contribute to students' tension and frustration in the classroom, indicating that low self-esteem can trigger anxiety. Anxious students often feel their language skills are inferior to their peers', usually stemming from stressful speaking experiences that reinforce the belief that speaking English is difficult. This mindset can lead to negative thinking and avoidance of language learning, including classroom activities and tests; a lack of preparation is a significant source of students' anxiety, with unprepared students fearing poor performance (Woodrow, 2004; Thornbury, 2005; Yuan, 2014; Tercan, 2015; Aulia, 2017; Marwan, 2007; Melouah, 2013).

## METHODOLOGY

### Research design

The current study was conducted in the post-COVID-19 period, with data collected from the top three universities in the northwest part of Cambodia. Researchers employed a quantitative research approach, adapting the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz *et al.* (1986). This instrument facilitated objective data analysis through the use of descriptive statistics, enhancing the reliability of findings due to the large sample size (Burns, 2000; Balsley, 1970). According to Creswell (2014), this approach provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem by enabling a broader range of insights and perspectives.

### Sample and data collection

Researchers selected the top three universities in the northwestern part of Cambodia for the study, utilizing purposive sampling to gather data from a total of 381 students. These students were pursuing higher education at the National University of Battambang, the University of Management and Economics, and National Meanchey University. Data collection involved both face-to-face interactions and the use of Microsoft Forms to gather quantitative data.

### Analyzing of data

For data analysis, researchers employed descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and linear regression. Researchers used descriptive statistics to comprehend the fundamental features of the data and generate concise summaries about the sample and the measures. They also employed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify the underlying structure of the data related to various anxiety factors. We used Cronbach's alpha to test the reliability of the scales used in the questionnaires. To examine the impact of identified factors on speaking anxiety and test the hypotheses, researchers used regression analysis. To perform the quantitative analysis, we inputted, refined, and analyzed the data from these surveys using SPSS version 26.0.

## FINDINGS

### Demographic data of respondents

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of the survey respondents. Of the total, 149 respondents (39.20%) were male and 232 (60.80%) were female, indicating a significant disparity between the number of men and women in the sample, with a notably higher representation of females. In terms of age, the majority of respondents, 304 (80.00%), were aged between 21 and 22 years. The next largest age group, those younger than 21, comprised 38 respondents (10.00%). There were 16 respondents (4.00%) aged between 23 and 25 years, and 23 respondents (6.00%) were older than 25 years.

Further demographic analysis is provided concerning the educational institutions of the respondents. As detailed in the table, 113 students (35.00%) attend University A, an equal number attend University B, and 115 students (30.00%) are enrolled at University C. This distribution is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1. Respondents' demographic table**

Personal Information	Frequency N=381	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	149	39.20
Female	232	60.80
<b>Group Age</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Younger than 21 years old	38	10.00
21-22 years old	304	80.00
23-25 years old	16	4.00
Older than 25 years old	23	6.00
Total	381	100.0
<b>University</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
University A	133	35.00
University B	133	35.00
University C	115	30.00
Total		100.0
Total	381	100.0

***Finding based on objective one: to investigate the factors that cause EFL learners' speaking anxiety in their higher education institutions***

The internal consistency and construct reliability of the questionnaire were tested using SPSS. Sauder *et al.* (2003) define reliability as the degree to which data collection methods agree with the results obtained. The goal of data reliability analysis is to determine whether or not it is trustworthy. Reliability testing determines the degree of consistency among different variables. The Cronbach's Alpha Score in this study was greater than 0.700, which is acceptable.

Table 2 examines Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which indicate the reliability of different constructs. Lack of knowledge (6 items) scored 0.843; lack of self-confidence (7 items) scored 0.757; lack of self-esteem (7 items) scored 0.751; low-class interaction (5 items) scored 0.773; lack of practice (5 items) scored 0.797; poor listening comprehension (4 items) scored 0.747, and English-speaking anxiety (5 items) scored 0.726. Table 2 shows a summary.

**Table 2. Internal Consistency Reliability of the Influence Factors**

Factors	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Lack of Knowledge	6	.843
Lack of Self-Confidence	7	.757
Lack of Self-Esteem	7	.751
Low Class Interaction	5	.773
Lack of Practice	5	.797
Poor Listening Comprehension	4	.747
English Speaking Anxiety	5	.726
Total	39	.750

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used on the Influence Factor items to classify fundamental factors that represent Influence Factor characteristics. A statistical procedure known as factor analysis collects a set of items to construct appropriate factors (Macaro, 2003). Before analyzing the variables, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity were used.

The KMO value of.834 and  $\chi^2 (171) = 1721.624$  ( $p < 0.000$ ) confirmed the validity of the factor analysis. The EFA yielded a six-factor solution, explaining 49.52% of the total variance. The eigenvalues were greater than one: LK = 5.65, LC = 4.889, LE = 2.989, LI = 2.05, LP = 1.74, and PL = 1.63. Each item was assigned to its original factor, which typically contained four to seven items and had factor loadings ranging from 0.59 to 0.70. Cronbach’s alpha values for all factors were satisfactory ( $\alpha = 0.84$  for LK,  $\alpha = 0.75$  for LC,  $\alpha = 0.75$  for LE,  $\alpha = 0.77$  for LI,  $\alpha = 0.79$  for LP, and  $\alpha = 0.74$  for PL). According to the findings of research question one, six factors contribute to anxiety in English-speaking individuals: lack of knowledge, lack of self-confidence, lack of self-esteem, lack of class interaction, lack of practice, and poor listening comprehension.

***Finding based on objective two: to examine the influences of anxiety factors on students’ English-speaking anxiety***

In response to research question two, our analysis shows that the independent variable has a significant influence on the dependent variable, accounting for approximately 64% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.64$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 3 details the various factors that contribute to ESA. LK makes a significant contribution ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while LC has a minor impact ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). LE has a significant effect on ESA ( $\beta = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), LI ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and PL ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). LP has a negative impact ( $\beta = -0.172$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Overall, the findings support Hypotheses H1, H3, and H4. In contrast, the empirical evidence did not support Hypotheses H2 and H5.

**Table 3. Summary of path coefficients and hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	SE	t-value	Decision
H 1	LK → ESA	0.31	0.374	3.826***	Supported
H 2	LC → ESA	0.05	0.395	0.622	<b>Not Supported</b>
H 3	LE → ESA	0.25	0.687	1.696**	Supported
H 4	LI → ESA	0.32	0.226	4.338***	Supported
H5	LP→ ESA	-0.172	0.649	-1.119	<b>Not Supported</b>
H6	PL→ ESA	0.269	0.381	2.783***	Supported

Beta=regression weight. SE=standard error. The t-values were obtained through using a bootstrapping algorithm with 1200 cases and 500 samples. \* $p < .10$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**DISCUSSION**

In short, the data collected from the survey with 381 participants helped the researchers answered the two research questions aforementioned: (1) What factors contribute to speaking

anxiety among EFL learners in higher education institutions? (2) How do these factors of anxiety influence students' academic performance? The study identified six primary factors contributing to English-speaking anxiety: Lack of knowledge, Lack of self-confidence, Lack of self-esteem, Low class interaction, Lack of practice, Poor listening comprehension. These factors collectively explained approximately 64% of the variance in students' anxiety levels, as indicated by the regression model ( $R^2 = 0.64$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The findings from this study highlight critical areas impacting EFL learners' anxiety levels in speaking English. Notably, the lack of self-confidence, self-esteem, and knowledge were significant contributors, suggesting that psychological and educational interventions are necessary to address these issues. Low class interaction and lack of practice were also significant, pointing to the need for pedagogical changes. Specifically, enhancing interactive and communicative teaching methods could provide more opportunities for students to practice English in a supportive environment, potentially reducing anxiety. Poor listening comprehension is another crucial factor, indicating that students may benefit from exercises that improve listening skills, thereby increasing their confidence in understanding and responding in English. This factor ties closely with the overall communicative competence of the students, suggesting a holistic approach to language teaching that integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Moreover, the statistical significance and strength of these factors ( $p < .000$ ) underscore their robust influence on learners' anxiety, offering educators clear targets for intervention. The high  $R^2$  value suggests that addressing these six factors could substantially reduce English-speaking anxiety among Cambodian EFL learners.

The findings of this study indicating that lack of knowledge and self-confidence significantly contribute to speaking anxiety resonate with recent research (Yuan, 2014; Tercan, 2015; Aulia, 2017; Liu and Wang, 2023); EFL students' anxiety could be substantially reduced by increasing their linguistic knowledge through tailored curriculum adjustments. This suggests a direct link between language proficiency and confidence levels, where greater language mastery reduces fear of errors, a major anxiety trigger (Watson & Friend, 1969; Young, 1990; Worde, 2003). Similar to lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem has been identified as a pivotal factor in EFL anxiety. According to a study by Haddad Narafshan, & Noori (2018), EFL learners' self-esteem is often undermined by perceived inadequacies in language skills, leading to heightened anxiety. The authors suggest interventions focusing on positive reinforcement and success experiences to build self-esteem and thereby reduce anxiety (Horwitz, 1986; Matsuda & Gobel 2003; Haddad Narafshan, & Noori, 2018; Chou, 2018).

Low class interaction and lack of practice were significant factors associated with speaking anxiety. This is supported by Liu (2018), who argues that interactive classroom activities can decrease anxiety by providing a non-threatening environment for language practice. Implementing group activities and peer-to-peer interactions could therefore be an effective strategy for reducing speaking anxiety (Liu, 2018; Aida, 1994; Alhmadi 2014, Alhmadi, 2017; Brown, 2001). The impact of poor listening comprehension on speaking anxiety highlights a critical aspect of language proficiency. Höl, D. & Kasimi (2022) discuss how improvements in listening skills can lead to better overall communicative confidence, thus reducing anxiety when speaking. They recommend structured listening exercises that progressively challenge students.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, there are six factors that make them feel anxious in the English foreign language classroom: lack of knowledge, lack of self-confidence, lack of self-esteem, lack of class interaction, lack of practice, and poor listening comprehension. The study identified six primary factors contributing to speaking anxiety in EFL learners: lack of knowledge, lack of self-confidence, lack of self-esteem, low class interaction, lack of practice, and poor listening comprehension. These elements collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in speaking anxiety levels among students. The statistical analysis reveals that these anxiety-inducing factors significantly affect students' academic performance, with a notable percentage of the variance in academic outcomes explained by these factors (64% as indicated by  $R^2 = 0.64$ ,  $p < .000$ ). Based on the hypothesis testing, the result provided support for H1, H3, H4 and H6, however, H2 and H5 were not supported. The independent variable has high significantly impact on dependent variables that explain approximately 64% of the variance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The results highlight the need for educational and psychological interventions in the identified areas. Researchers recommend improving pedagogical approaches, increasing supportive practices in language learning, and enhancing listening skills to mitigate the adverse effects of anxiety. Interestingly, among the five factors identified, low self-confidence and lack of practice did not significantly affect students' English-speaking anxiety in the Cambodian context. Nevertheless, all relevant stakeholders should assist students in enhancing their self-confidence and design curricula and extracurricular activities that encourage proactive English-speaking practice.

Recommendations for various stakeholders are as follows:

- For English teachers, they should recognize students' language anxiety and increase interactions to reduce it. They should also provide more class activities and constructive feedback, helping students to engage actively in speaking English.
- For Universities, they should investigate the causes of and solutions for overcoming anxiety, and implement strategies to help students lessen their anxiety. Universities should also offer more academic and non-academic support services to enhance students' speaking proficiency.
- For Students, they should identify effective practice and learning strategies to address their own challenges in order to reduce their English-speaking anxiety. Participation in English clubs and engaging in voice chats, social media, and peer-to-peer conversations both inside and outside of the classroom are recommended.

For future research, researchers suggest exploring the qualitative aspects of language anxiety by including interviews or focus groups. This approach would provide deeper insights into the personal experiences and perceptions of students regarding these anxiety-inducing factors. Additionally, longitudinal studies could assess how interventions targeting these factors influence anxiety and language proficiency over time.

## LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to this study. Purposive sampling may limit the generalizability of findings, especially among diverse Cambodian EFL learners. Cross-sectional designs restrict causal inference; longitudinal studies are preferable for understanding temporal relationships between teaching methods and anxiety levels. Self-reported measures may introduce bias because of students' subjective estimates of anxiety levels. The findings are specific to higher education in Cambodia and need validation in other cultural contexts. Researchers did not account for external influences such as family expectations and societal pressures, which could have an impact on the analysis of English-speaking anxiety. While the factor analysis was robust, a significant portion of the variance remains unexplained, suggesting the influence of additional variables not considered in the study.

## ETHICS STATEMENTS

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research and Development Center of the National University of Battambang. The ethical standards of the university research committee conducted all procedures performed in this study involving human participants.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of Interest.

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